

A Human Vivisection.

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I.
GENTLEMEN," the Professor said, "we shall this evening carry our scientific investigations to their logical conclusion." One of the quintet of students grouped about him thrust out a hand with a gesture of protest. The others turned in his direction with white faces. The Professor bent the coldness of his eyes upon them in a scrutiny that froze.

"Still the traditions of the nursery," he said with icy tongue. "Gentlemen are you yet infants? Or are you men and scientists?"

The protestant dropped his hand with a sigh that was half a groan. The other men faced round like soldiers at the beat of drum.

"So so!" the Professor commented. "But a moment of weakness. When we first shave and nick our chins we are disposed to cast aside our razors, and go through life barbarians. Gentlemen, we have been barbarians too long. We have capered on the outer edge of knowledge—superstitious clowns, priest-ridden savages—too many centuries. A man is born—he lives—he dies. He was not—he is—he will not be. That is the life-history of any human entity. A combination in certain proportions of Carbon, Hydrogen, Nitrogen, Oxygen, and sundry other unimportant elements—he is but a combination somewhat more complex than with the limited resources of our day we have so far been able to produce in the laboratory. That which we know as man is eternal, is indestructible by reason that the matter of which he is composed is indestructible. But it is in his ultimate principles of Carbon, Hydrogen, Oxygen, and Nitrogen that he is everlasting. As man he is a mere ephemeral phenomenon—an eccentricity—a freak of nature.

From the scientific standpoint it cannot be of the smallest consequence to an individual compound, or to other compounds of the same *genus*, whether the elements of which he is composed exist in combination or dissociate. He may be equally happy—to use a conventional phrase—in the form of an atom of carbon as he may be in that of a Czar or a Prime Minister. Gentlemen, in the course of our researches, we do not hesitate to reduce to its constituent elements any other chemical or physiological compound. Shall we then hesitate because a particular compound chances to be more organically complex—for that reason more scientifically interesting? We merely free elements which sooner or later will be freed without our agency. And as 'sooner or later' are terms of no scientific significance, they are terms we are at liberty to disregard. Admitted that it is lawful—gentlemen, I am now arguing from the standpoint of vulgar prejudice—admitted that because man is a higher animal, therefore a lower one may properly be sacrificed to instruct, to amuse him, or to alleviate his pain, we come logically to the axiom that because one man is less educated, less useful, less physically perfect, or in some other way inferior to his fellows, he may properly be sacrificed for the instruction, amusement, or benefit of those fellows. Or, further, that out of a hundred men equally valuable, one may be sacrificed; or out of ten—or even five—a unit may be sacrificed. For my own part, gentlemen, I have no prejudices. If science have anything to learn, or medicine a theory to verify, I should unhesitatingly pronounce in favour of our selecting *not* the least useful, not the least perfect or highly-developed among us, but, on the contrary, the very finest and most admirable organisation at our disposal, in order that we may observe the phenomena of the human mechanism in their very best present-



"A MAN OF ESSENTIALLY DEGENERATE TYPE"

ment. However, in deference to such prejudices as still remain to you, I have procured for our investigations this evening a man of essentially degenerate type, mentally, morally, and physically. He comes of a line of kleptomaniacs and drunkards. He himself has spent the greater portion of his life in gaol. His conditions are such that he may well be content to be resolved into his elemental principles, where as a molecule of oxygen or carbon he will be harmless, painless, and without hunger or alcoholic thirst. In deference further to your sentiments—for I regret to see still in some of you a lack of that intellectual composure without which such researches as ours can never be prosecuted to a successful issue—I have ascertained that our subject has no ties of wife or child. Mr. Savage, there is brandy

behind you on the table. Perhaps it would be well for such of the class as have migivings to fortify themselves. The cardiac centres are in some cases still under the reflex influence of sentiment and superstition—transmitted, doubtless, on the maternal side. No, I thank you, Stevens, I will not take anything. I may possibly need to address you again, and I find fluid liable to set up irritation of the larynx. Gentlemen, if you are ready, I will ring now for our subject."

The hand of the former protestant again went out in deprecation. He turned a sick face on the master.

"You can retire if you like, Savage. Only remember, in the present state of public feeling, you are bound to secrecy."

"No, no, I'll see it through," the other muttered.

The Professor pressed an electric push.

II.

A MAN entered. The Professor had kept strictly within the truth as regarded the unfitness of the subject. Only a glance was needed to show this. He was stunted and crook-legged, with shelving brows and bullet head. His hair was stubbly, coarse, and short. His eyes were dull and bloodshot. He breathed heavily and reeked of beer. He seemed abashed as he shambled awkwardly into the clean electric light and into the presence of six black-coated, well-groomed "swells." He removed his greasy cap, and stood blinking his lids in the glare, fidgeting from foot to foot. Then, as the men remained staring at him, and the Professor proceeded to take off his coat and roll his shirt-sleeves up, he ventured huskily:

"Evenim', gemmen. At yer serviss, I'm sure gemmen."

One of the students started forward.

and crossing the room laid a hand on the Professor's arm.

"What does he think?" he demanded, hoarsely.

The Professor turned his eyes. The student shivered.

"I should say," he said, "that in his case the cerebrum is incapable of any process worth the name."

The student's fingers shook and half fell away from their grasp.

"What has he had?" he asked irresolutely.

The Professor shifted his arm from beneath the other's hold, and took up his mackintosh overall.

"Pooh!" he said indifferently. "He's had a ten-pound note and six weeks drunken debauchery."

"Good Heavens!" the other broke out, and went back to his place.

The greasy cap in the hand of the "subject" began to fidget nervously. In the shadeless glare of the electric light you could have seen a rhythmic motion of his coarse nostrils as he swelled his chest for courage. He loosed a scarlet neckerchief about his throat. His bloodshot gaze was glued to the Professor. Some instinct had hold of him. He glanced at the door; but the door had been locked, and over it a wadded curtain dropped. Had he looked more closely he would have seen that there was not an inch of the room but was thickly padded. From a distant corner came the sound as of a creature sighing—now breathing in, now breathing out, as in some dire distress. But the cold light flooded everywhere, and there was no living creature whence the sighing issued. Yet you could hear it—now breathing in, now breathing out, in husky respiration. No gentle rhythm of lung, as in sleep or quiet waking, but the harsh mechanical succession of expiration on inspiration heard when the act of breathing no longer warms the chilling blood, but is the merest echo of a life's habit. The subject smothered an imprecation. He jerked his cap spasmodically in the direction of the sound.

"Summun breathin?" he interrogated, with an ashen face. The Professor, bending above the last button on the front of his mackintosh overall, straightened himself and glanced round.

"Will somebody kindly switch off that respiratory pump?" he requested blandly, "we shall not need it yet."

One of the students walked over to the corner. His hands were busy for a moment. The last breath swelled, sobbed, and broke in a muffled shriek. Then all was silence.

It were as though a life had gone out. The subject took two instinctive steps across the room—away from the corner and nearer the Professor.

"By Gord!" he laughed nervously, "but's funny. I tuk it fur summun breathin'."

"Savage," the Professor said, and his tones were level as ice, "unlock the safe and take out cases one and five. It is not necessary to open them," he interjected in a lower voice.

III.

"Now then my man," addressing the subject, "strip to the shirt. And look sharp, there's a good fellow, it is getting late."

The subject shifted from one foot to the other. He laid his cap before him on the floor. He moistened his lips with a dry tongue. He coughed.

"No larks, gents," he said, "bargin was I wasn't to feel nothink uv it."

"Oh, that was the bargain was it?" the Professor commented, turning his back as he tested the sharpness of something against his nail.

"Yes. Ye see 'twas like this, gemmen. Chap come along and sez he, a clappin' me on the back, 'Want a ten-pun note, Bill?' sez he. 'Not me,' I sez 'I've jest got back from marryin' the Barness Burdy Coots and me weskit's as full o' million-pun notes as a hegg's o' meat.' That was oney my larks, gents, cos I fencied 'is was larks, cos I've never in aw my life know'd ten-pun notes a floatin' round like butterflies. Then I sez seriouser, 'Wot's the resk?' cos I know'd, ov course, if ten-pun notes fly round like butterflies they ain't to be copped uthout burnin' yer fingers. 'Nare a resk at all,' sez he, 'oney gemman's 'eerd on yer in the pappers—a cove gets in the pappers wen he's onfortnet gents—an he wants to git a squint uv yer brain to write a book about.' 'Urt?' sez I. 'Not a bit uv it,' sez he. 'Done' sez I, cos I'd eerd uv gemmen mikerscopin' fellers and weighin' em and photygraphin' em and takin' their finger-ends in wax and uvver queer does. There ain't a tanner left uv that

there ten-pun note, but ere I'm, not wishin' to do a dirty trick by a gemman as is free wi' ten-pun notes and moughtn't forgit a cove wen it was all over——"

"That will do my man," the Professor interrupted. "Get out of your things and don't talk so much."

"Awright mister," the subject said, unbuttoning his coat, "though wy yer can't see a chap's brain as he stands gits me."

He was soon undressed and stood before them in a shirt which was fringed with a vandyke of rags at wrists and throat.

"Best linnings bein' got up, gents," he apologised, with a half-abashed impudence; "and I warn't togged out for kimp'ny."

He seemed to get courage as he talked. He looked from one to another, taking each into his confidence with a waggish ruffianism. He had an air of finding the "gemmen" affable, although they did not say much. He pulled his rags down over his misformed limbs. The Professor had been right in characterising him as a degenerate. His knees knocked. His shins bowed. His wrists bulged under the ragged edges of his sleeves.

In his shirt he was a mere caricature of a human thing.

"Get on that table," the Professor said, pointing a long, white finger.

The subject again showed signs of apprehension. His teeth chattered. He took up his red neckerchief and tied it dilatorily about his throat. It was cold standing there in his thin shirt. And he was gaining time.

"I wasn't to be 'urt," he appealed, hoarsely.

"You are going to have something to put you to sleep."

"Chloryform?" he demanded.

"Chloroform," the Professor assented.

"I say, you'll see me through it, mister," the other urged, in a slightly shuddering voice. "I ain't a-goin' to be 'urt?"

"I'll see you through it," the Professor promised.

The subject scrambled on to the table.

"A ten-pun note's a ten-pun note," he apostrophised, "but a cove's got to think uv 'is skin."

"The strap on the left," the Professor said. "If you cannot do it, Savage, I will go round and adjust it myself."

The man sat up. Shudders ran shivering through him.

"See 'ere, gents," he expostulated, "I ain't got to be strepped down like a 'orse. Giv ye me oath I won't kick."

Somebody brought a blanket and folded it over him. Somebody caught his hands and somebody caught his feet. A thong tugged tight across his chest. He could not move. His head seemed bound in iron. A cloth covered his eyes.

"It's all right, good fellow," somebody said in his ear. "Just breathe this in quietly and you'll be asleep in a few minutes."

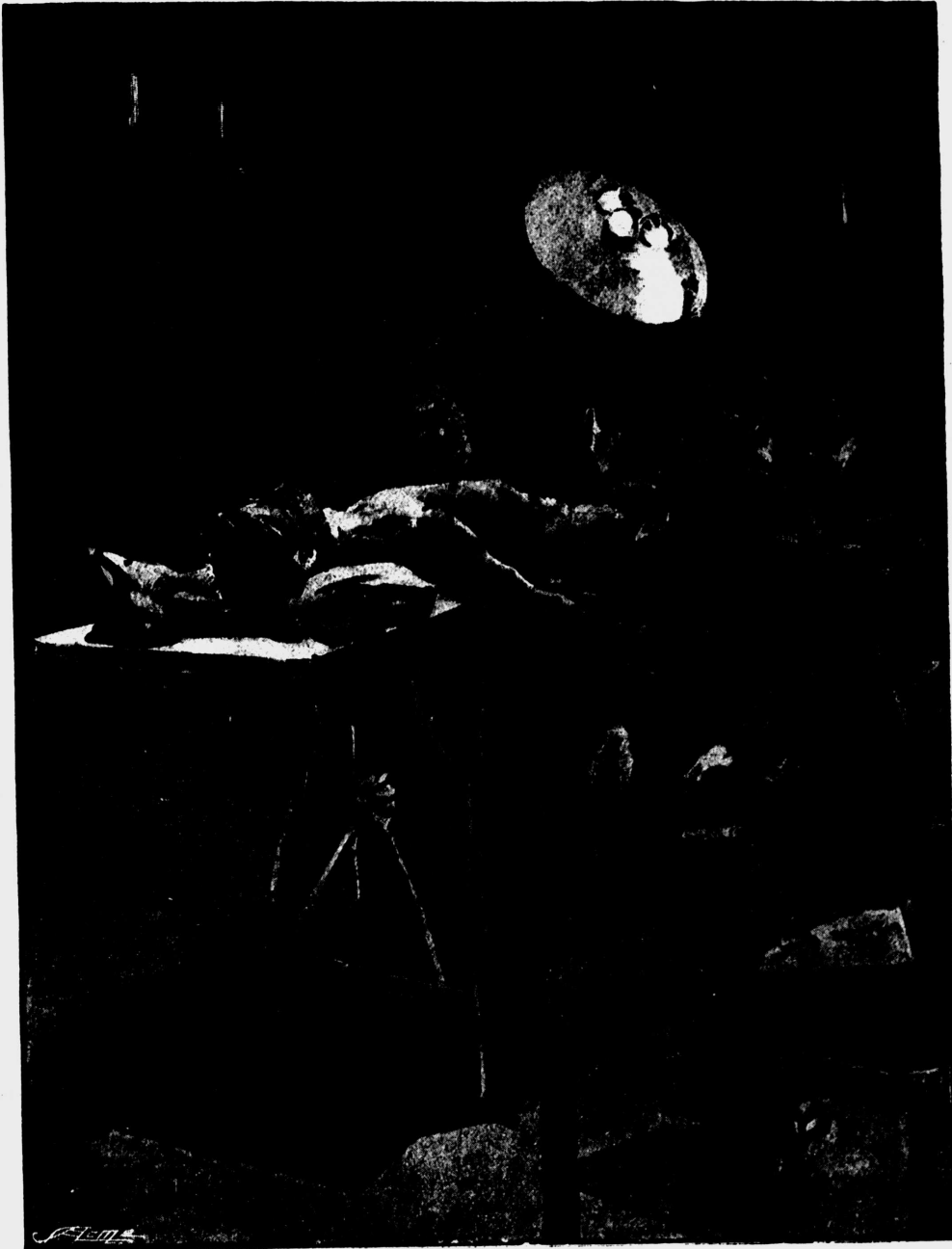
"Wot makes their phizes all so yallery wite?" the subject questioned dreamily. It was rather pleasant. Warm hands were about him. The blanket comforted him. Something tasted sweet on his tongue. He felt no inclination to stir. He lay in a kind of stupor. Suddenly he heard a dog howl—a slow-drawn, agonised howl. A muffled voice—a voice which sounded a long way off—observed:

"It's that collic again. Stuff a beef lozenge down its throat. Or, I say, Savage, spike its medulla. We've had three days on it already. It isn't worth much."

He started struggling. He felt choked. The thong across his chest cut into him. Cords galled his wrists and ankles. Then a horrible and mortal terror fell upon him. But the power of escape had gone. His limbs and tongue were numbed.

"I say," he muttered brokenly, "see me through it, gents. I've been a bad un, but there's a gell as b'lieves in me, and mebbe—and mebbe a kid on its way."

In his stupor it seemed to him there was a sudden altercation. In that which sounded like a scuffle, the mask over his face was half torn off. There was a blaze of light. Men's voices were raised in dispute. Then he heard one man's voice speaking coldly on a sudden silence. It hissed in his hot ears. Again there was silence. He seemed to be breaking slowly out of a dream. He muttered, and tried to call. The light grew stronger; he was coming to. They hadn't lied, then; he was coming to, and he hadn't been hurt. What a funk he'd been in—the swells must have thought him a milk-liver! The hissing speech stopped. Then a long breath broke above him in a sob. How mortal queer it all was. He tried



"THE POWER OF ESCAPE HAD GONE"

to strike out. They were blinding the light away again; it was dark, and something clung tight over his face. Did he shout? He meant to shout, but could not hear himself. Where were they throwing him? He was dead, and they were throwing him into a pit. Down, down—the air whistled round him. Gord! what a cropper he'd come when he got to the bottom! All at once he ceased

from falling; he was swimming. The water was about him; it lapped him gently, gurgling in his ears. He couldn't get his breath; he choked. It scalded his throat and nostrils. He was drowning—drowning—drowned. Blackness and nothingness. Then he leapt like a wild thing in the air. Was this hell? God help him! He had never been bad enough for this—no one had ever been

bad enough for this! A searing flame had torn his body down from throat to waist. Hot hands were tearing out his vitals; molten metal scorched him. God help him! He'd been a bad 'un—yes, he'd been a bad 'un, s'elp 'im, but he'd never been bad enough for this. Let it be remembered for him that, with all his badness, he had never taken life.

IV.

THE lung-pump was at work. The husky rhythm of its gasp, swelling and emptying, sounded desolately. Something seemed to have gone wrong with it. It wheezed and laboured with a weird disquietude. The chest walls had been thrown back and the blood sponged up. Yet was there a constant ooze of weeping scarlet. The purple lungs lifted and fell laboriously. The heart in its membranous bag pulsed faintly. The room was shrouded in a steamy vapour, which, pouring from a long-spouted kettle, made fantastic clouds. Through these the scientists showed intent and silent, with beads of moisture in their hair and beards. Only two remained—the Professor and the Chloroformist—three, if you count the Thing on the table. As the others one by one had stolen out the Professor had lightened upon their sickened faces out of his steel eyes.

"Dolts!" he had sneered, his fingers busy at their task; "they are always like this the first time. Did they think it would be pretty?"

The Chloroformist stood firm. The finger of his one hand lay on the congested wrist. With the other he lifted the eyelid from minute to minute with a desperate intentness, testing sensation on the surface of the eyeball. At intervals he dropt fresh chloroform into his cone.

"The body is niggardly of its secrets," the Professor said; "we shall not easily find what we seek."

He touched the heart apex roughly with the handle of his scalpel. It leapt and palpitated like a frightened thing.

"Reflex action still good," he murmured; "we ought to get at something."

He switched off the pump. The lungs sank slowly, then rose and sank again. Their rhythm became of the faintest.

You could scarcely see them lift. The blue wrist under the Chloroformist's hand grew bluer. The eyeballs blackened. The pulse waned.

"Thank Heaven!" he muttered.

"Let him go!" he said aloud. "For God's sake let him go. I can't hold on much longer."

The Professor stared up frigidly. A sneer froze on his face.

Presently he switched the apparatus on again. The lungs filled harshly. They swelled with a sigh. The former breathing strength was gained. The skin got back its colour. The pulse waxed. The Chloroformist drew a hand across his eyes.

"What a devil he is," he mumbled. "But whatever happens I mustn't give up."

"Pulse still good?" the Professor queried.

"Good" was the laconic answer.

"The fellow's a bad specimen. I'm afraid we shall not make much out of him."

A minute later.

"Stop the chloroform!"

The Chloroformist looked him in the face.

"The chloroform. Stop the chloroform I say."

"What a devil he is," the Chloroformist mumbled again.

"Pooh!" the Professor said. "I thought you better seasoned."

The Chloroformist dropt fresh chloroform.

"I'm not enough seasoned for that," he retorted. The chloroform bottle was in his hand. As he re-stopped it, the Professor, with a rapid movement, jerked it from his grasp. It fell on the floor and smashed into a hundred pieces. An odour sweet, merciful and benign ascended on the air.

"So I relieve you of all responsibility," the Scientist said with a sardonic laugh. The Chloroformist stared, choked and stuttered. Then he burst weakly into a passion of tears.

"Why Grimston," the Professor said, "what a fool you're making of yourself. Now we shall test the heart's action under the influence of pain."

V.

THE Professor buttoned his coat about him as he came briskly down the steps.

"Cool night," he commented. "I should say the mercury stands below thirty."

The man behind him shuddered. His hands shook as with rigorous cold when he turned into the street. Yet his coat was flung wide, and he took off his hat and held a white face to the air. He reeked of brandy.

A young woman huddling on a doorstep opposite crept across the road.

"It must a' bin 'ere," she said half to herself.

Then she turned up a face that showed frigid and pinched under the gas-lamp.

"'Xcuse me, gents," she faltered through her chattering teeth, "but it's 'alf-past three, and are you quite done wi' my Bill?"

The man with the sick face clutched a railing. The Professor moved a step in front of him. He stood a moment scanning the shivering creature.

"I am afraid we have not the pleasure of your Bill's acquaintance," he said banteringly.

The girl cried out. Her lips dragged at the corners.

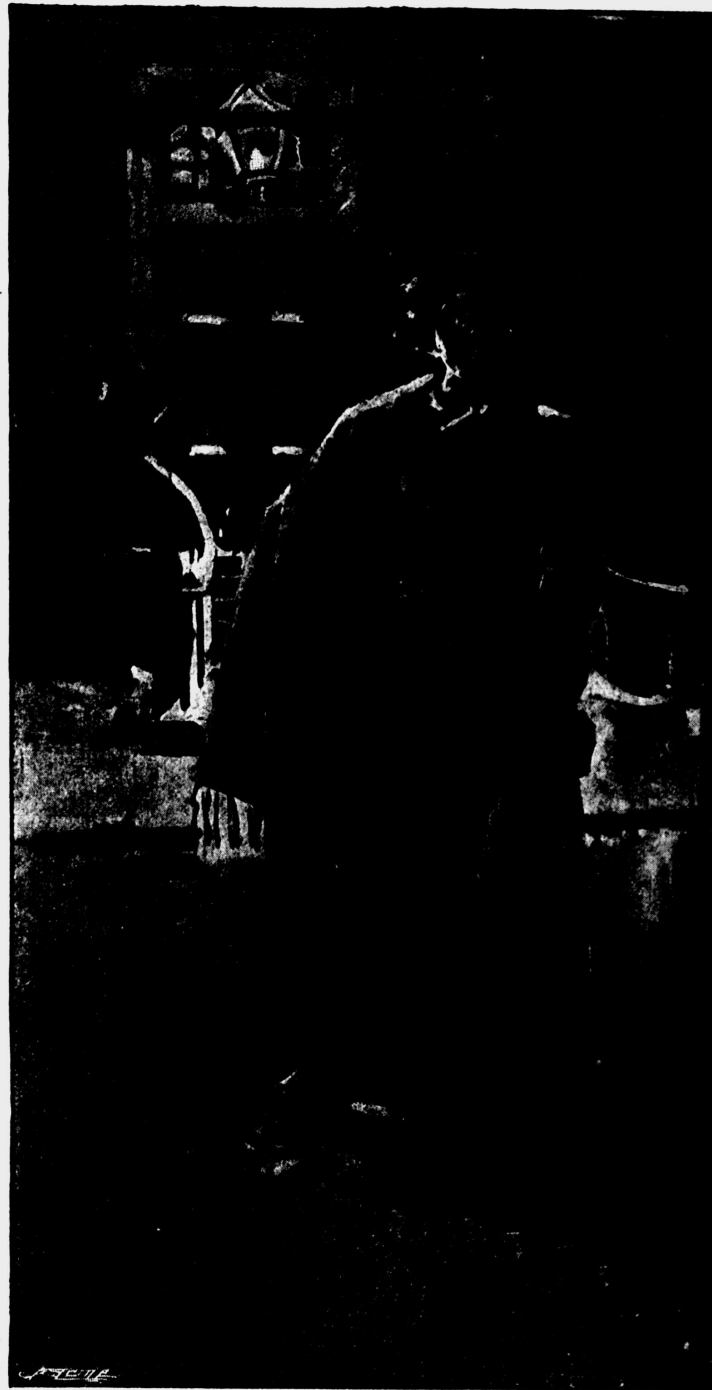
"Ain't you seen 'im?" she stammered. "He said he was comin' 'ereabouts to some gents. I've been watchin' the light this two hours, thinkin' 'twas 'ere."

After a pause, during which she stared round like one stunned, "Ain't you seen 'im?" she repeated. "He's a big-built,

fine-lookin' feller, sir—my Bill. Dark eyes and a red neckcher."

"Ah!" the Professor said, "you'll find he has gone home. It is nearly four o'clock."

The girl broke out in a frantic fit of sobbing. "He's not gone 'ome. I'm



"HAVE YOU SEEN MY BILL?"

'fraid he's got into mischief agen, and got took. And he promised me he wouldn't never any more."

The Professor shook his head. "Most men are liars, my good woman," he said smoothly. "Good night!"

But the girl had rushed sobbing away. The Professor caught his companion's arm. "Come, come, Grimston!" he said, sharply, "pull yourself together! You know as well as I do it is merely a question of being the first time."

FAILURE.

We have not done so very well,
 We, who were so wise,
 If, after all, the shadow lies
 Upon our hearts, and in our eyes.
 We somehow missed, 'twixt Heaven and Hell,
 The brighter tale there was to tell—
 We, who were so wise!

We did not climb so very far,
 We, who were so strong,
 Full soon we sighed, "The road is long;
 Give over; hush the comrade song;
 And leave our happiness afar
 Above our heads, a virgin star"—
 We, who were so strong!

We did not dare much, or achieve,
 We, who were so great.
 Had we not faith to strive and wait?
 Had we not hearts to conquer Fate?
 Nay, let us cease; depart; and leave
 The unattained. But shall we grieve?
 We, who were so great?

WILLIAM MUDFORD.